

1. (Thrice amended) A method for facilitating evaluation, in connection with the procurement or delivery of products or services, in at least one of (i) a potential financial transaction and (ii) operation of an enterprise, each context involving a member of a first class of parties in a first role and a member of a second class of counterparties in a second role, the method comprising:
 - a. obtaining for each of the parties in the first class and storing in a first digital storage medium responses from at least one of the party and a party co-evaluator to a first set of forced choice questions designed to permit analysis of the responses so as to reveal underlying party preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such party's fit with a counterparty in such context;
 - b. obtaining for each of the counterparties in the second class and storing in a second digital storage medium responses from at least one of the counterparty and a counterparty co-evaluator to a second set of forced choice questions designed to permit analysis of the responses so as to reveal underlying counterparty preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such counterparty's fit with a party in such context;
 - c. deriving, in a first computer process, from the responses to the first set of questions for each such party, a first preference profile for each such party through analysis of the responses;
 - d. deriving, in a second computer process, from the responses to the second set of questions for each such counterparty, a second preference profile for each such counterparty through analysis of the responses;
 - e. for each party, analyzing, in a third computer process, the preference profile of such party in relation to the preference profiles of the counterparties to derive a first list of counterparties for which the preferences of the party closely match the preferences of the counterparty and the preferences of the counterparty closely match the preferences of the party and communicating the first list to such party.

22. (Thrice amended) An apparatus for facilitating evaluation, in connection with the procurement or delivery of products or services, in at least one of (i) a potential financial transaction and (ii) operation of an enterprise, each context involving a member of a first class of parties in a first role and a member of a second class of counterparties in a second role, the apparatus comprising:

a. a first computer process, in communication with a first digital storage medium, for obtaining for each of the parties in the first class and storing in the first digital storage medium responses from at least one of the party and a party co-evaluator to a first set of forced choice questions designed to permit analysis of the responses so as to reveal underlying party preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such party's fit with a counterparty in such context;

b. a second computer process, in communication with a second digital storage medium, for obtaining for each of the counterparties in the second class and storing in the second digital storage medium responses from at least one of the counterparty and a counterparty co-evaluator to a second set of forced choice questions designed to permit analysis of the responses so as to reveal underlying counterparty preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such counterparty's fit with a party such context;

c. a third computer process for deriving from the responses to the first set of questions for each such party a first preference profile for each such party through analysis of the responses;

d. a fourth computer process for deriving from the responses to the second set of questions for each such counterparty a second preference profile for each such counterparty through analysis of the responses; and

e. a fifth computer process for analyzing the preference profile of each party in relation to the preference profiles of the counterparties to derive a list of counterparties for which the preferences of the party closely match the preferences of the counterparty and the preferences of the counterparty closely match the preferences of the party, and communicating the list to such party.

23. (Twice amended) An apparatus for facilitating evaluation, in connection with the procurement or delivery of products or services in at least one of (i) a potential financial transaction and (ii) operation of an enterprise, each context involving a member of a first class of parties in a first role and a member of a second class of counterparties in a second role, the apparatus comprising:

a. a first question and response module, in communication with a first digital storage medium, for obtaining for each of the parties in the first class and storing in the first digital storage medium responses from at least one of the party and a party co-evaluator to a first set of forced choice questions designed to permit analysis of the responses so as to reveal underlying party preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such party's fit with a counterparty in such context;

b. a second question and response module, in communication with a second digital storage medium, for obtaining for each of the counterparties in the second class and storing in the second digital storage medium responses from at least one of the counterparty and a counterparty co-evaluator to a second set of forced choice questions designed to permit analysis of the responses so as to reveal underlying counterparty preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such counterparty's fit with a party in such context;

c. a first profile processor for deriving from the responses to the first set of questions for each such party a first preference profile for each such party through analysis of the responses;

d. a second profile processor for deriving from the responses to the second set of questions for each such counterparty a second preference profile for each such counterparty through analysis of the responses; and

e. a closeness-of-fit analyzer for analyzing the preference profile of each party in relation to the preference profiles of the counterparties to derive a list of counterparties for which the preferences of the party closely match the

preferences of the counterparty and the preferences of the counterparty closely match the preferences of the party, and communicating the list to such party.

25. (Twice amended) A method of structuring a database to facilitate evaluation, in connection with the procurement or delivery of products or services, in at least one of (i) a potential financial transaction and (ii) operation of an enterprise, each context involving a member of a first class of parties in a first role and a member of a second class of counterparties in a second role, the method comprising:

- a. obtaining for each of the parties in the first class and storing in a first data record in a first digital storage medium responses from at least one of the party and a party co-evaluator to a first set of forced choice questions designed to permit analysis of the responses so as to reveal underlying party preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such party's fit with a counterparty in such context;

- b. obtaining for each of the counterparties in the second class and storing in a second data record in a second digital storage medium responses from at least one of the counterparty and a counterparty co-evaluator to a second set of forced choice questions designed to permit analysis of the responses so as to reveal underlying counterparty preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such counterparty's fit with a party in such context;

- c. deriving, in a first computer process, from the responses to the first set of questions for each such party a first preference profile for each such party through analysis of the responses, and storing the first preference profile in a third data record in a third digital storage medium;

- d. deriving, in a second computer process, from the responses to the second set of questions for each such counterparty a second preference profile for each such counterparty through analysis of the responses, and storing the second preference profile in a fourth data record in a fourth digital storage medium;

e. for each party, analyzing, in a third computer process, the preference profile of such party in relation to the preference profiles of the counterparties to derive a first list of counterparties for which the preferences of the party closely match the preferences of the counterparty and the preferences of the counterparty closely match the preferences of the party and storing the first list in a fifth data record in a fifth digital storage medium.

29. (Twice amended) An apparatus for structuring a database, in connection with the procurement or delivery of products or services, in at least one of (i) a potential financial transaction and (ii) operation of an enterprise, each context involving a member of a first class of parties in a first role and a member of a second class of counterparties in a second role, the apparatus comprising:

a. a first question and response module, in communication with a first digital storage medium, for obtaining for each of the parties in the first class and storing in a first data record in the first digital storage medium responses from at least one of the party and a party co-evaluator to a first set of forced choice questions designed to permit analysis of the responses so as to reveal underlying party preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such party's fit with a counterparty in such context;

b. a second question and response module, in communication with a second digital storage medium, for obtaining for each of the counterparties in the second class and storing in a second data record in the second digital storage medium responses from at least one of the counterparty and a counterparty co-evaluator to a second set of forced choice questions designed to permit analysis of the responses so as to reveal underlying counterparty preferences that can be used to estimate the closeness of such counterparty's fit with a party in such context;

c. a first profile processor for deriving from the responses to the first set of questions for each such party a first preference profile for each such party.

through analysis of the responses, and storing the first preference profile in a third data record in a third digital storage medium;

d. a second profile processor for deriving from the responses to the second set of questions for each such counterparty a second preference profile for each such counterparty through analysis of the responses, and storing the second preference profile in a fourth data record in a fourth digital storage medium; and

e. a closeness-of-fit analyzer for analyzing the preference profile of each party in relation to the preference profiles of the counterparties to derive a list of counterparties for which the preferences of the party closely match the preferences of the counterparty and the preferences of the counterparty closely match the preferences of the party, and storing the list in a fifth data record in a fifth digital storage medium.

REMARKS

1. Claims 1-17, 19, 20, 22, 23, and 25-29 were pending in this application. Claims 1, 22, 23, 25, and 29 have been amended. No claims have been cancelled, and no new claims have been added. Therefore, claims 1-17, 19, 20, 22, 23, and 25-29 are pending in this application.

2. The Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, 5-13, 16, 17, 19, 22, 23, and 25-29 under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Puram et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,289,340 B1 (hereinafter Puram). The Examiner also rejected claims 2, 4, 14, 15, and 20 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Puram and CareerMosaic.

Applicant has amended independent claims 1, 22, 23, 25, and 29. In amended claims 1, 22, 23, 25, and 29, responses to a set of forced choice questions are obtained from each party/counterparty or party/counterparty co-evaluator. The set of forced choice questions are designed to permit analysis of the responses so as to reveal underlying party/counterparty preferences. For each party and counterparty, a preference profile is derived from the responses